Vol. VII. Numb. 34

THE OBSERVATOR.

Remarks on Elections in Scotland, *particularly on that of* Glaſgow. *On the taking up of Mr.* Mackay, *of* Palgoun, *on Suſpicion of High Treaſon, &c. a few Weeks before the Election began for the County of* Kirkudbright, *that he ſtood for. A Letter from* Scotland *to the* Obſervator.

From **Wednesday**, June 9. to **Saturday**, June 12. 1708.

Obſ. WHAT News have you from *North Britain*, *Roger*, about the Elections there?

Country-m. Very ſtrange News, Maſter. Our publick Prints tell us of a very odd Election at *Glaſgow*, where one Half of the Electors would not ſtay 'till the other was come, but went and choſe one Perſon; and when the other Half came together, they went and choſe another.

Obſ. That's an odd Story indeed, *Roger*: What farther Information have you about it? You ſhould always enquire into the Particulars of ſuch Things.

Country-m. I do, Maſter; and am inform'd, that the Perſon firſt choſen, is Mr. *Daniel Campbel*, one of the Treaters for the Union, and Members of the laſt Parliament; and the other, is Mr. *Rogers*, the Provoſt of *Glaſgow*: And to let you ſee, Maſter, that I have been diligent in my Enquiries, I have inform'd my ſelf, that there are but four Burroughs in that Diſtrict; to wit, *Glaſgow*, *Renfrew*, *Ruglen*, and *Dumbarton*; the Commiſſioners from *Renfrew* and *Ruglen*, would not ſtay 'till the Commiſſioner from *Dumbarton* arriv'd; and the Provoſt of *Glaſgow* would not go to the Council-Houſe 'till he came; and this occaſion'd the double Election.

Obſ. I think the Provoſt of *Glaſgow* was perfectly in the Right, *Roger*. 'Tis very hard, when there are but four Electors, if they can't ſtay a little for one another. I hope when the Parliament meets, they will take Care to regulate ſuch Things; otherwiſe, the Nation may be perpetually impos'd upon. And on this Occaſion, I ſhould think it proper for the Electors to give Inſtructions to their Members, to propoſe an Act to prevent ſuch Abuſes for Time to come. And above all, it ſeems to be indiſpenſibly neceſſary for the People of *Scotland* to inſtruct their Members to inſiſt upon a Law effectually to prevent Bribery, and other undue Practices at Elections; for ſince their Electors are ſo few, it will be an eaſy Matter for Courtiers, or others, when ſo minded, to bribe a Majority, without putting themſelves to much Expence; for ſince nine of the Diſtricts, as appears by the Union-Act, have but five Electors each, and the other ſix but four each; when we come to have ſuch a Court as that of King *Charles* the II. which did not grudge large Penſions to take Members off from the Duty they ow'd their Country, it will be no hard Matter for them to bribe the Majority of four or five Electors in each of thoſe Claſſes; and by Conſequence to have all the fifteen Burgeſſes from *Scotland*, to vote what way they pleaſe. And as they have about 160 Lords, many of whom have not Eſtates to ſupport their Dignity, Poſts and Penſions, whenever we have an arbitrary Court, may go a great way in returning ſixteen Lords, who ſhall likewiſe vote as the Court would have them. Then, as to the Knights of Shires, or Barons, as they call them, the Electors are comparatively ſo few, in regard to what they are in *England*, that Money well plac'd, may alſo have great Influence among them; or there's an eaſier Way for it. The Courtiers, if ever we ſhould be ſo unhappy as to have a Prince that will countenance it, may ſet up Candidates of their own, and make the Election controverted at leaſt, which will put the other Party to a vaſt Charge, in bringing up Witneſſes from *Scotland*, and maintaining them here, to prove their Complaints before a Committee of Elections.

Country-m. Theſe Conſiderations, Maſter, ought to prevail with us, as well as with the *Scots*; to inſiſt upon good Laws for preventing Corruption and Bribery at Elections; for 61 Members return'd in the Manner you ſpeak of, by an arbitrary Court from that Country, may prove a dead Weight upon us here in *England*, with a Vengeance; and if they fall in with ſuch of our own Members as have Places, Commiſſions, and Penſions, or are any otherwiſe under the Influence of a Court, they may overturn our Liberties at once. Therefore, Maſter, I hope, when our Parliament meets, they will take Care to prevent ſuch undue Practices here, and in *Scotland* too. But pray, Maſter, look into the Union-Act; for ſome *Scotch* Gentlemen tell me, that according to that Act, the Provoſt of *Glaſgow* is legally choſen, and not the other.

Obſ. That we muſt leave to the Determination of Parliament, *Roger*. All that we can do, is, to ſtate the Fact as it appears to us. The Union-Act, pag. 116. ſays, 'That where the Votes of the Commiſſioners for the ſaid Burroughs met, to chuſe Repreſentatives from their ſeveral Diſtricts, to the Parliament of *Great Britain*, ſhall be equal. In that Caſe, the Preſident of the Meeting ſhall have a caſting or deciſive Vote, beſide his Vote as a Commiſſioner from the Burrough from which he is ſent; the Commiſſioner from the eldeſt Burrough preſiding in the firſt Meeting, and the Commiſſioners from the other Burroughs in their reſpective Diſtricts, preſiding afterwards by Turns, in the Order as the ſaid Burroughs are now call'd in the Rolls of the Parliament of *Scotland*.

Now, *Roger*, if it be true as you ſay ſome *Scotch* Gentlemen inform you, that *Dumbarton* is the eldeſt Burrough in that Claſs; then the Commiſſioner from *Dumbarton* muſt be Preſident, and has two Votes in this Caſe, which, with Mr. *Rogers* own Vote, makes three to two.

Country-m. But I have a more terrible Story to tell you, Maſter, from *Scotland*; 'tis in *Tueſday* laſts *Flying-Poſt*. When I read it there, I went to the other End of the Town, and enquir'd of ſome *Scotch* Gentlemen, my Acquaintance, if they had any ſuch Advice. They told me, it was all true; and one of them ſhew'd me a Letter from the Gentleman himſelf, with the Story; which in Subſtance is thus, Maſter:

'*Alexander Mackay*, of *Palgoun*, a Member of the late *Scotch* Parliament, who ſtood fair to be choſen for the Stewartry or County of *Kirkudbright*, for next Parliament, and had an Aſſurance of a Majority of unqueſtionable good Votes, was on the 29th paſt, ſome Weeks before the Election was to commence, taken up by a Warrant from the Earl of *Leven*, on Suſpicion of Treaſon, and Treaſonable Practices, and brought by an Officer of Dragoons to *Edinburgh*. The ſaid Mr. *Mackay* gave early Proofs of his Zeal and Affection to the preſent Government, and took the Oaths both to the late King, and her preſent Majeſty; and farther, is ready to take the Abjuration, when requir'd: And having given ſuch undoubted Proofs of his firm and conſtant Loyalty,

'alty, he is ready, at Peril of Life and Fortune, 'to answer any Accusation, that either by Malice, 'or Design of his evil Wishers, may be exhibited 'to the Government against him; and desires, for 'his Vindication, this may be made publick.

Obs. A terrible Story indeed, *Roger*. Did you enquire who the Earl of *Leven* is, and by what Authority he did this?

Country-m. Yes, Master. The Earl of *Leven* is Commander in chief of her Majesty's Forces in *Scotland*; and 'tis suppos'd, has a general Warrant to take up suspected Persons.

Obs. How, *Roger!* Are there no Civil Magistrates in *Scotland?* Have they no Sherriffs or Justices of Peace there, that such a Power is put into Military Hands? I should have thought, it had been enough for his Lordship to have been impower'd to send a Party of his Troops to bring in obstinate Criminals, that could not be otherwise dealt with; but in such Cases as this, 'tis my Opinion, *Roger*, the Civil Magistrate had been much more proper to be employ'd. But be that how it will, his Lordship, no Doubt, has Orders; and that must be his Justification. Pray, *Roger*, did you inform your self who was Mr. *Mackay*'s Competitor?

Country-m. Yes, Master, they tell me he is an Officer of the Army.

Obs. 'Twould be a pretty way of managing Elections indeed, *Roger*, if every Officer of the Army, who stands Candidate, should procure a Party of Soldiers to take up his Competitor. I hope such Practices as those will be enquir'd into when the Parliament meets. 'Tis true, the last Parliament suspended the *Habeas Corpus* Act 'till the 23d of *October*, because of the intended Invasion, that the Government might be enabl'd to take up and secure such Persons as they had Reason to suspect of High Treason, or Treasonable Practices. But this Instance looks very odd, that so long after the design'd Invasion, a Gentleman, that gave such Proofs of his Zeal and Affection to the present Government, should be taken up on such Suspicion just a few Weeks before the Election was to commence. 'Twould seem to me, that nothing but particular Orders from six of the Privy Council, or one of her Majesty's Secretaries of State, according to the Act, can justify it.

Country-m. I will speak to my Representatives, Master, to enquire into the Matter.

Obs. 'Tis their Concern, *Roger*. Our brave Commoners have from Time to Time been so jealous of their Liberties, that they have resolv'd no Peer should concern himself about the Elections of Commoners. I am sure there's much less Reason, that Commanders of the Forces should in any sort offer to influence Elections.

Country-m. Aye, Master, you will find more Reason to insist upon that, when I tell you of a Letter I have just now receiv'd for you, dated at *Edinburgh*, *June* 3. which is thus:

'Sir, I thought fit, since you argue so much for 'the Freedom of Elections, to let you know, that 'the ----- of ----- leaves no Stone unturn'd to carry the Elections of the Peers for his Friends; and 'fearing lest the E. of *Strathmore*, who had a Guard 'upon him in his House, on Account of the late 'Invasion, should give his Proxy another way, 'sent him Word, either to send him his Proxy, or 'otherwise he must go to *London* with the other 'Prisoners; but if he comply'd, he should be dis-'charg'd. This has so far prevail'd on his Lord-'ship, that he as given the ---- his Proxy, tho' that 'Noble Lord was always of another Party.

Obs. I can't believe, *Roger*, that the Government would imploy any Man so weak and wicked, as to be guilty of such a Practice. But more in our next.

Just publish'd

¶ Chronological Tables, in 2 Parts, viz. Part the 1st, according to the Computation of Archbishop Usher, containing the most remarkable Occurrences from the Creation of the World, to the birth of Jesus Christ. Part the 2d, according to the Computation of Helvicus, compar'd with the Tables of Mr. Francis Tallent, containing the most remarkable Occurrences from the birth of Jesus Christ, to the late dreadful Storm and Tempest, Novem. 1703. Which Tables are not only very useful for studeous Persons, Clergy-men, Scholars, and others, but also very ornamental to hang up in Gentlemens Houses, &c. being curiously engraven on Copper-plates, printed on the best Imperial Paper. Sold at Mrs. Lutterell's, Picture Shop, in Westminster-Hall; at a Stationers Shop, at the Talbot on London-bridge; and by Henry Dod, Writing-master, at the Hand and Pen in Devonshire-Street, without Bishopsgate, London. price 5 s. the Pair.

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